



County of Los Angeles
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

425 Shatto Place, Los Angeles, California 90020
(213) 351-5602

DAVID SANDERS, Ph.D.
Director

March 8, 2006

To: Mayor Michael D. Antonovich
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, Chair Pro Tem
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke
Supervisor Don Knabe

From: David Sanders, Director *DS*
Department of Children and Family Services

Bryce Yokomizo, Director *Bryce Yokomizo*
Department of Public Social Services

Board of Supervisors

GLORIA MOLINA
First District

YVONNE B. BURKE
Second District

ZEV YAROSLAVSKY
Third District

DON KNABE
Fourth District

MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH
Fifth District

**DECEMBER 20, 2005 AMENDMENT TO BOARD AGENDA ITEM #44: SKID ROW
OUTREACH STRATEGIES**

INTRODUCTION

On December 20, 2005, your Board instructed the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) and the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to further enhance Skid Row Outreach efforts by making the Skid Row Family Outreach Team's (SROT) first priority child safety. In addition, it was requested that the Departments provide a monthly update on the status of the project.

The following is a second monthly update on the status of the coordinated service enhancements made in order to assure child safety, provide ongoing case management and enforce the Board's zero tolerance policy for families on Skid Row and the related outreach activities.

SERVICE ENHANCEMENTS

On January 23, February 7, 9, 10, and 22, 2006, representatives from DPSS, DCFS, DMH, and the CAO Services Integration Branch met. The meetings were called by the CAO Service Integration Branch as a result of the CAO assuming a lead role relative to the plan for services to families on Skid Row. The purpose of the meetings was to create an Enhanced Family Diversion Plan to Assure Child Safety, Enforce Zero Tolerance Policy and identify services and funding gaps for Homeless Families on Skid Row. Please refer to the attached Enhanced Family Diversion Plan – Attachment I.

In summary, these meetings resulted in the following recommendations and actions.

1. **RECOMMENDATION:** DPSS Eligibility staff will extend their hours of availability to complete eligibility assessments at the Union Rescue Mission (URM) and the Midnight Mission (MM).

ACTION TAKEN: DPSS Eligibility staff is co-located in each of the Missions and at the Weingart Center and has expanded their hours of operation on Skid Row.

The DPSS Eligibility team is now present to complete eligibility assessments at Union Rescue Mission beginning at 7:00 AM until 5:00 PM and at the Midnight Mission (MM) beginning at 6:00 AM until 7:30 PM.

DCFS has expanded its presence on Skid Row. With the assistance of DPSS, DCFS has secured approval from URM to co-locate a Children's Social Worker beginning at 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM. DCFS is continuing to seek approval from the Midnight Mission to co-locate a Children's Social Worker at MM as well. The Emergency Response Command Post staff is now conducting outreach in Skid Row, between the hours of 6:00 PM - 9:00 PM Monday through Friday. The staff also patrols the area on Saturdays and Sundays.

DCFS is currently in the process of finalizing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Los Angeles Police Department and the Los Angeles City Attorney to outstation a CSW at the Central Police Station between the hours of 4:00 PM and 2:30 AM. Approval of the MOU is anticipated within the next thirty days.

2. **RECOMMENDATION:** DCFS staff on Skid Row will be provided with electronic access to the Child Welfare System/Case Management System in order to determine if a family on Skid Row has had past DCFS involvement.

ACTION TAKEN: Access to identify open DCFS cases is currently available through two means: Access to the DPSS LEADER system and the DCFS Child Welfare Systems/Case Management Systems. DPSS computers provide access to general information regarding the status of open or closed cases. The CWS/CMS database currently accessible through the DCFS Child Abuse Hotline provides detailed information regarding the previous case history. In addition, DCFS will pursue the allocation of a laptop computer for the outstationed DCFS staff to provide them with direct access to the CWS/CMS database for purposes of data entry into the system.

The DCFS Child Protection Hotline is also maintaining an internal flagging system to ensure that child abuse and neglect referrals related to the Skid Row area are flagged and expedited for assignment to the regional office. The purpose of this flagging system is to facilitate and expedite processing of Skid Row referrals generated from

within the zip code area of 90013 to assure child safety and to maximize the coordination of services to homeless families.

3. **RECOMMENDATION:** DPSS will complete a questionnaire on all homeless families to collect data; specific reasons for homelessness; and the level of services provided on every homeless family encountered on Skid Row for the purposes of creating a database that will be shared by the Team.

ACTION TAKEN: The first meeting of the Database workgroup was held on February 23, 2006 at which time the team reviewed the Homeless Questionnaire developed by DPSS. Please refer to Attachment II. Each of the departments serving Skid Row homeless families and LAHSA will be able to input information into the database on the families they serve and have access to general information regarding the identification of the agencies currently involved in providing services to the Skid Row homeless families.

4. **RECOMMENDATION:** DPSS will utilize Contract Housing locators to locate permanent housing outside of Skid Row.

ACTION TAKEN: DPSS will have Contract Housing Locators available in July 2006.

5. **RECOMMENDATION:** A uniform case management protocol for the Skid Row families is needed to ensure that all agencies are working together and using consistent standards.

ACTION TAKEN: DMH will create the case management protocol based upon the success of the Homeless Families Project that began in 2002. The case management protocol was completed by DMH on March 2, 2006 and is currently out for review by the other Departments.

As of February 13, 2006, representatives from DPSS, DCFS, DMH, and LAHSA have been meeting weekly to evaluate the Skid Row Family Outreach Team (SROT) procedures, meet with the SROT members, and conduct a weekly case review with the SROT members. The program managers will continue to meet weekly to evaluate the program.

DCFS also established a new supplemental risk assessment protocol specific to use by the SROT DCFS members and the DCFS staff who will be co-located at the Missions. The purpose of the new tool is to ensure that the following issues are addressed with every homeless family encountered by the SROT: Previous DCFS history, History of Refusing Community Services, History of Domestic Violence and Mental Health, Inability to Provide Minimum Sufficient Level of Parenting, Parent's Failure to Protect the Child, Caretaker's Explanation for Homelessness, Parent's Inability to Access Services, Chronicity of Homelessness, Caretakers Ability to Meet The Child's Immediate Needs for Supervision, Food, Clothing, and/or Medical/Mental

Health Care Needs, and Physical Living Conditions Immediately Threatening to the Health and/or Safety of the Child. (Please refer to Attachment III - the Supplemental Safety Assessment tool).

DCFS has developed a policy specific to a Parent's Failure to Provide a Child with Adequate Housing to ensure child safety in working with families without adequate shelter. Final approval is anticipated within thirty days.

DCFS has provided training specific to the assessment and detection of child abuse and neglect by professionals who work to serve the Skid Row population on a daily basis. To date the following agencies have been trained:

December 9, 2005 – Family Preservation Service Providers/Downtown collaborative;
January 17 and 18, 2006 – DPSS Homeless Case Managers and Administrators;
February 22, 2006 – DCFS CAHL SCSW's, ERCP ARA's and SKID ROW STAFF.

Training for Central City Service Providers is scheduled for Monday, March 13, 2006.

EXPANSION OF CONTRACTED SERVICES

- On January 27, 2006, DCFS held a meeting with Para Los Ninos to discuss implementation of Family Preservation Services in Skid Row. It was identified at this meeting that there are no specified funds for family preservation services specific to Skid Row. However, Para Los Ninos agreed to work with homeless families on Skid Row and have set aside slots for these families from the current funding allocated through SPA 4's family preservation funds for open SPA 4 DCFS cases.
- On January 30, 2006, DCFS held a phone conference with the Family Support Manager of Hillside's Family Services. Hillside's reports that it is willing to be involved in the Homeless Project on Skid Row by providing services to the families who are vouchered for temporary housing from Skid Row into the local motels. However, it has no money available to support a new project and no resources to provide shelter or housing. Hillside's will meet with DCFS, Para Los Ninos and other agencies on the Homeless Project in order to establish a plan of services. The date of the meeting will be arranged.
- On February 14, 2006, representatives from DCFS, Para Los Ninos, Hillside's, Assistance League, California Hospital, and the Institute for Multi-Cultural and Counseling Education Services (IMCES) met at Amanecer Counseling Center. The purpose of the meeting was to address Service Expansion and Coordination, Interagency Partnership, and assure Child Safety for the Homeless Families on Skid Row. As a result of the meeting, two additional agencies agreed to service families identified by the Skid Row Outreach Team (SROT). The agencies are El Centro Del Pueblo and Institute for Multi-Cultural and Counseling Education Services (IMCES).

- In the event that any of these agencies exceeds its annual allocation as a result of providing these services for the families on Skid Row, DCFS will supplement the funding by an additional 10%. Currently the DCFS member of the SROT will make the initial referral to the family preservation agency. As families are relocated to other areas outside of Skid Row, the SROT CSW will make a referral to the respective area Family Preservation agency. The SROT CSW will identify and refer families that are not enrolled in the CalWORKs Welfare to Work Program and are therefore not eligible to the full range of CalWORKs homeless benefits through DPSS. The plan for services includes 90 days of case management services directed towards overcoming obstacles for the family to maintain stable housing.
- One Family Preservation agency, Para Los Ninos, is currently serving homeless families on Skid Row. Four additional agencies have agreed to begin services upon receipt of training. The agencies are Assistance League, Hillside, El Centro Del Pueblo, and IMCES. The agencies have identified a need for training to equip their staff to work effectively with homeless families. Para Los Ninos has agreed to provide special training for this purpose and has submitted a training proposal. The training dates will be arranged.

MONTHLY OUTREACH ACTIVITY REPORT

Attached is the January 2006 statistical report on the activities of the Skid Row Outreach Team and the DPSS eligibility staff outstationed on Skid Row. Please see Attachment IV.

ADDITIONAL RELATED MEETINGS HELD

- On January 26, 2006, The Los Angeles Central Providers Collaborative and the Los Angeles Health and Human Services Department hosted a special planning meeting with DCFS and DPSS. The purpose of the meeting was to further discuss and update the initial plan developed at the November 3, 2006 meeting regarding for the strategies to provide services to the homeless families in the Skid Row area.
- On January 31, 2006, representatives from DPSS, DCFS, LAHSA, Public Counsel, and Public Health attended the First 5 LA Roundtable: Homeless Families in Skid Row. First 5 LA hosted the policy roundtable to discuss existing and potential collaboration among county agencies to address service needs of homeless families in Skid Row. This meeting was a direct response to the December 20, 2005 Board Motion focusing on the issue of **child safety** among homeless families. The goals included the following: Assure Child Safety, Enforce Zero Tolerance Policy, Assure Service Coordination, and Ensure Well-Being of Families. The strategies identified included the following: Service Expansion & Coordination, Interagency Partnership,

Evaluation of Outreach Services, Policy & Regulatory Changes and On-Going Monitoring. The next meeting will take place in March 2006.

- On February 22, 2006, Beyond Shelter sponsored a meeting for the members of the Homeless Families working group. The purpose of the meeting was to plan for the first meeting to re-convene the L.A. Countywide Coordinating Council for Homeless Families. The first meeting is scheduled for March 22, 2006.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The Department of Children and Family Services and Public Social Services remain committed to attaining the goals of assuring child safety, providing ongoing case management and enforcing the Board's zero tolerance policy for families on Skid Row. We are excited about the new opportunities that have been identified during the collaboration between County Departments and the community agencies that will assist Skid Row families in the care and protection of children.

DS:BY:aw

Attachments:

- I. Enhanced Family Diversion Plan
- II. Homeless Questionnaire
- III. Supplemental Safety Assessment
- IV. Monthly Report on Skid Row Outreach Strategies

c: Chief Administrative Officer
County Counsel
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors